

Who Does What And Why?: ESL Administrators' Perspectives On The Roles Of ESL Specialists And Mainstream Teachers

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In this era of high stakes accountability, the relationship between English as a Second Language (ESL) specialists and mainstream teachers has become even more complex. For this study, four district level ESL administrators were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol about a) the roles and responsibilities of ESL teachers, b) the knowledge and skills mainstream teachers need to support ELLs, and c) the quality of university teacher preparation in light of public school realities. Findings indicate that ESL specialists play important instructional and non-instructional roles within schools that are not always valued by colleagues. Mainstream educators need greater preparation in understanding English proficiency levels, second language acquisition, cultural competence, and accountability for the success of ELLs. Recommendations focus on improving collaboration, accountability, cultural competency, and understanding of effective ESL program models.

Nationwide English as a Second Language (ESL) specialists and mainstream teachers alike share responsibility for producing equitable learning outcomes for English Language Learners (ELLs). Although ELLs spend the majority of their school day in mainstream content classes, Indiana is one of only 15 states where there is, “no requirement that all teachers have expertise or training in working with ELLs” (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008, p. 120). Therefore, a majority of Indiana’s mainstream teachers are unprepared to meet the needs of Indiana’s growing ELL population. This fact underscores the importance of collaboration between ESL specialists and mainstream teachers. However, it is well established that collaboration between ESL specialists and mainstream teachers is complicated by hierarchical relationships of power, perceptions of status, and differences in the nature of instructional experience in the schools (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). In this era of high stakes accountability, the ESL specialist and mainstream teacher relationship has become even more complex, requiring greater focus on understanding,

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defining, and problematizing issues of teacher identity, power, and agency (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) in relationship to ELLs.

To better understand the impact of changing demographics, policies and practices, and political context on the roles and responsibilities of Indiana teachers of ELLs, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four district level ESL administrators. This study is part of a larger project focused on defining mainstream teacher competencies for serving ELLs in the mainstream classroom and refining ESL specialist competencies to improve ESL teacher preparation in Indiana. The perspective of district administrators is particularly important because of the leadership role they play in shaping local policy and instructional practices. As such, we conducted interviews to uncover district level ESL administrators' perspectives on a) the roles and responsibilities of ESL teachers, b) the knowledge and skills mainstream teachers need to support ELL students, and c) the ability of university teacher education to meet identified needs. Based on content analysis of these district interviews, findings, implications, and recommendations for school leaders and university teacher educators will be shared to clarify roles and responsibilities and improve teacher preparation.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We conducted semi-structured interviews during the 2009-2010 school year with four female district level ESL administrators, one from urban, two from urban/sub-urban, and one from sub-urban/rural school communities who serve ELL student populations from a wide range of educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The administrators were White (2), Asian, and Latina with a range of ESL and district level experience (3 to 25 years). Further, the administrators represent school districts located within a variety of socioeconomic environments, including high poverty areas. Participants were selected based on interest, availability, accessibility, and knowledge level.

We conducted one interview, approximately forty-five minute to one hour in length, with each participant, which were recorded by the principal investigator and a collaborator. We transcribed the audio recordings and conducted an initial review of the written transcripts. Next, we conducted a more in-depth content analysis (Creswell, 2003) to identify important themes and to highlight commonalities among, and distinctions between, the participants' perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of ESL teachers, the knowledge and skills needed by mainstream classroom teachers to support ELLs, and the quality of university preparation in these areas. For example, we asked the following types of questions: (a) In your ideal school community, what do you feel the role of the ESL Specialist should be?;

(b) If every mainstream teacher could have been prepared to support ESL students in the regular classroom, what do you wish they would know and do?; (c) For which responsibilities do you feel university coursework (ESL certification) best and least prepares ESL Specialists?; and (d) If a university were focusing on preparing every mainstream teacher to support ELLs, how would you differentiate between the preparation of the ESL Specialist and the mainstream teacher?

FINDINGS

The findings in this section highlight what district ESL administrators shared as well as what was not talked about. Based on the data, we present the findings under four main headings: ESL teacher responsibilities, the ideal role of the ESL specialist, quality ESL teacher preparation quality, and quality mainstream teacher preparation.

ESL Teacher Responsibilities

The analysis of ESL administrators' responses regarding the major components of an ESL teacher's responsibilities at the elementary and secondary levels identified three major themes: student instruction; collaboration with mainstream classroom teachers; and cultural service as a liaison. These instructional and non-instructional roles of ESL teachers demonstrate the complexity of the ESL specialist position.

Student instruction

All four ESL administrators cited direct student instruction as a major responsibility for elementary and secondary ESL specialists. More specifically, ESL administrators identified instructional activities focused on English language development, literacy development, and content area development. One administrator stated that ESL specialists "are really trying to accelerate their [ELL students'] language acquisition, develop their language skills so that they can be more successful in the classroom, and the only way to do that is simultaneously teaching grade level content and their language skills." Integrating language development with content was reported by all ESL administrators to be a priority for ESL specialists. Perhaps the most important content area focus of instruction at the elementary level was reading development. One ESL administrator reported that elementary ESL teachers spend a majority of their time on reading activities. She shared:

I am afraid somewhere along the way we are losing some language

development. Sometimes there is extra time allotted for oral language development, but sometimes there isn't. Ideally, I would like to see that part of the picture, but with the reading first period you have got your 90-minute block, and then you've got your intervention. Unless one of those interventions can be dedicated to language, language acquisition, or language vocabulary—those kinds of things—away from just the reading process . . . they are not going to be successful.

This focus on reading development is likely motivated by the desire to meet federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) accountability determinations under the *No Child Left Behind Act* based on standardized assessment performance in English/language arts. At the secondary level, all four ESL administrators consistently indicated that the focus of instruction for ESL specialist was sheltered content area instruction and language development in a scheduled class or block for ESL, based on proficiency level.

According to the district administrators, the language development program model implemented in each school district influences the responsibilities of ESL specialists. Based on the interview data, the districts implement several instructional models, including push-in and pull-out at the elementary level, to support student learning. Two ESL administrators identified push-in support at the elementary level as the main model. One ESL administrator stated, "From the linguistic perspective, they [ESL teachers] are going in and we do a push in model at the elementary. We do some limited pull out." Another administrator stated, "We primarily have our ESL interventionist working with our students that are levels 1-3. Those are the neediest. They offer consult to level fours. Yes, less pull out and more in class work with classroom teachers."

At the secondary level, ESL administrators reported that language instruction for ELLs is more likely to be scheduled based on their level of English proficiency. One ESL administrator stated, "At the high school, it is based on proficiency level. I have been trying to really, really change that model where we teach kids based on grade level - which means that you have level 1s and level 4s in the same room." In two of the four ESL administrators' school districts, ELL students at the secondary level receive both push-in support in the content area classroom as well as a scheduled class for ESL.

The ESL administrators' statements revealed that the selection procedures for identifying ELL students to receive direct instruction vary. In some cases, only beginner (Level 1) through intermediate (Level 3) ELLs receive direct instruction, while more advanced (Level 4) ELLs receive little to no support for language and literacy development. In Indiana, the goal is

to advance ELL students to fluent English proficiency (Level 5), as assessed on the LAS Links assessment, so it is important that ELLs continue to receive support until they reach Level 5.

Decisions about which program model to implement are often impacted by scheduling and time. According to one ESL administrator, “Most of the day, they’re [ESL specialists] trying to make their schedules work to offer the quality instruction they [ELLs] deserve with the limited time they have to work with them.” Another ESL administrator mentioned that ESL teachers and administrators are limited in their ability to impact the instructional model, particularly at the secondary level because of the nature of the schedule. These statements imply that both ESL specialists and administrators have limited or only contingent authority and agency to make decisions about school-based instructional schedules and the quantity of instruction that ELLs receive. At the elementary and secondary levels, therefore, ESL teachers’ instructional responsibilities are relegated to a support role for content area development and reading, rather than being seen as focusing on language development.

Collaboration with mainstream classroom teachers

The second major area of responsibility described by three of the four ESL administrators for elementary and secondary ESL teachers was collaboration with mainstream classroom teachers. While administrators acknowledged that ESL and mainstream classroom teachers should have strong, collaborative, working relationships to support student learning, the actual reported quality of such collaboration varied. Some collaboration was considered positive. One ESL administrator stated that, “They [ESL teachers] should be calibrating with the classroom teachers pretty closely to align with what they’re working on to pre-teach or re-teach what the students are working on in the [regular] classrooms. Our ESL teachers are going to grade level team meetings and offering input and intervening at that stage of the preparation process, and then hopefully our next step would be to be more inclusive.” Another ESL administrator reported that, “The elementary [ESL] teacher is, at this point in time, working more with the general education teacher in a more team setting.” These examples of positive collaboration were reported by the ESL administrators from the more suburban school districts with smaller ELL populations.

Challenges to collaboration were also reported, particularly at the secondary level. One ESL administrator stated that ESL specialists “really have to do more of that collab [collaboration] piece while they’re in the classroom. You have a continuum of...you’re a guest, a glorified IA [instructional assistant], to a really collaborative co-teaching environment. So we really have the continuum there.” Further, this ESL administrator

stated that she instructs her staff of ESL specialists by saying that, “You are a teacher of language, and you are a teacher of teachers.” Another ESL administrator stated that ESL specialists are “interpreting [for classroom teachers], ‘This is a level 3 kid. This is what this means....’” She continued by saying, “We still have very, very traditional teachers at the secondary level. And because they’re so traditional it’s almost—you have to hold their hand so aggressively.” This difficulty with collaboration at the secondary level was reinforced by another ESL administrator who stated, “In secondary schools, the buildings aren’t set up that way so. . . I guess you have core teachers: math, science, social studies. . . . But you don’t have a mainstream teacher that is responsible for one group of students. It is a different dynamic.” This dynamic means that ESL teachers at the secondary level must collaborate with a wider range of content area teachers to support the instruction of ELLs.

Engaging in collaboration with mainstream teachers was reported as a key – albeit challenging—responsibility of ESL specialists. Based on the ESL administrators’ responses, it appears that initiating this collaboration is seen to be a responsibility of the ESL specialist, rather than being part of a systemic approach supported by school administrators to ensure the academic success of ELLs. The inconsistent quality of collaboration among ESL specialist, teachers, and administrators reported by ESL administrators demonstrates a need for multiple levels of improvement. For example, general educators, administrators, and teacher educators need greater preparation and ownership for ELLs, and ESL specialists would benefit from greater attention to developing leadership and advocacy skills specifically focused on promoting and sustaining school-based and system-wide change processes.

Cultural liaison

A third major responsibility of ESL specialists at the elementary and secondary levels reported by two of the four ESL administrators was the role of cultural ambassador or liaison to ELLs and their families. According to one ESL administrator, “They [ESL specialists] are linguistic ambassadors of their language. They are cultural ambassadors—cultural interpretations. And they’re also service providers for kids and families... They [classroom teachers] don’t attempt to learn the language or try to engage. They just, ‘911-ESL program’... So I would want that to become an ownership piece because once that service piece is – I don’t want to say taken away, but once it is put in the place where I believe it belongs – then I think more ownership happens.” This expectation to serve as a cultural liaison demonstrates the complexity of the ESL teacher role. This ESL administrator highlighted how the cultural liaison role limits instructional time as well as the development

of shared ownership and responsibility by others in the school community for educating ELLs. Members of the school community may not understand or value the complexity of instructional and non-instructional responsibilities that ESL teachers carry.

Ideal Role of ESL Specialist

The ESL administrators reported complex, multi-faceted views on the ideal role of an ESL specialist. Their responses revealed that, ideally, ESL specialists would have the ability to support grade level, content-area knowledge development, the ability to differentiate instruction by English language proficiency level, and the ability to support academic language development as part of their instructional role, which was discussed above. In addition to these instructional aspects of the ideal role, ESL administrators specifically highlighted the importance of having credibility as a knowledgeable specialist and a leader in policy making and professional development as desirable roles.

Specialist credibility

ESL administrators stressed that ideally ESL specialists would have credibility as an expert resource in their school to operate effectively as part of a team. However, they acknowledged that ESL specialists' knowledge of language and culture was not viewed as credible, or valued at the same level, as mainstream teacher content area knowledge. Two of the four ESL administrators identified increased credibility and teamwork as their primary desires for the ideal role of an ESL specialist. One ESL administrator stated that her goal would be for ESL specialists, "to be known as a resource person, as well as a teacher" and that a bilingual person be seen as "an asset to a school." This comment indicates that ESL specialists may not be recognized within their school settings as possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, or dispositions to be seen as credible resources for content learning. Another ESL administrator described the credibility issue from the perspective of engaging in teamwork with content-area teachers:

I think I have a lot of experts, but I don't know that I have a lot of specialists. And a specialist has that quality of being a coach, of being a collaborator, of knowing when to push, and when to back off. And when you are promoted as an expert, you have the greatest opportunity of being isolated by others and then promoting the isolation of yourself, and putting yourself into this martyrdom, and putting yourself on an island.

This underscores the need for ESL specialists to be viewed as collaborative team members who can enhance the understanding of mainstream teachers in positive ways from multiple perspectives, including, but not limited to, language development.

Leadership credibility in policy and professional development

ESL administrators highlighted the importance of increasing the quality of leadership preparation for ESL specialists. One ESL administrator reported that:

Ideally I think a specialist should be very engaged with leadership... so that when decisions are being made...they're very much a part of that conversation. And I think... professional development is embedded and the learning happens in that systematic way.... If there are teacher leadership teams...they're engaged in that. And when you start talking about this, you realize that they're not teaching as much.

This leadership role was reinforced by another ESL administrator:

I think they would do research, and they would be a coach. Looking at data... I think they could bring the scholarship back in and really have some very hard line data about what quality instruction looks like, and be able to refine that for different language groups, for different contexts, for different content areas.

To effectively reach this goal, ESL specialists need preparation on conducting data-driven professional development for mainstream teachers, and they need time in their daily schedule to provide this support. Based on the ESL administrators' feedback, ESL specialists would ideally have recognized credibility in content learning as well as leadership that would further elevate ESL specialists within school settings from secondary to equal status with peers.

Quality of ESL Teacher Preparation

Another purpose for these interviews was to identify quality components of university preparation for ESL specialists. Three out of four ESL administrators stated that ESL specialists were well prepared on second language acquisition and instructional best practices. One ESL administrator stated that, "I think they do a really good job of trying to bridge the research with why there is a need to change instruction and to be more engaging." Another ESL administrator stated that, "They [universities] have taught them

the curriculum. They understand curriculum.” A third ESL administrator stated that, “The second language acquisition course...I’ll say that the content is very good.” These responses indicate that ESL specialists are well prepared with knowledge about the intersections among language development, curriculum, and pedagogy. ESL administrators also indicated that university coursework prepared ESL specialists well on classroom management, adapting assessments, and cultural knowledge of the ESL community.

In terms of what university coursework least prepares ESL specialists for, the ESL administrators’ responses were less cohesive; however, many of the issues noted were non-instructional and were idiosyncratic to the context and teachers of their local districts. For example, these issues included addressing knowledge gaps related to the variability of ESL program structures and functions, the use of data to inform instruction, the identification of external funding sources to support ELL services, the understanding needed to relate to ELLs and parents on a personal level, the understanding of cultural differences and variation within ELL populations, the strategies needed to support literacy development, the use of community resources, the development of lesson plans, and the knowledge of strategies for collaboration.

The ESL administrators, however, were most unified in identifying the ability to collaborate with mainstream teachers as an area of improvement for ESL teacher preparation. One ESL administrator stated that ESL specialists:

Try to collaborate with other people, and then they get shut down and go hide in the corner for a while. But you don’t go hide in the corner forever. You’ve got to brush yourself off, and go hit it again. And... school administrators, have to understand why that needs to happen, and I am not sure they do.

Another ESL administrator, who cited the need to recruit ESL specialists who have the disposition to collaborate, stated the following:

I think ESL teachers are kind of martyrs...but the system that we have designed for them promotes it. And so I really worry about that. So knowing that now, when we interview, that’s what we are looking for is ‘Who’s a partner? Who is willing to be adversarial, and take a teacher on, and not be pissed off if things don’t go their way?’

Another ESL administrator recommended that university preparation programs improve focus on developing collaborative relationships: “I wish you were doing more with...the human interaction level—the relationship

building level. Not just among teachers and students but among teachers and teachers, teachers and administrators.” The ESL administrators feel an enhanced focus on relationship building would improve teacher collaboration and student engagement. These responses indicate that university ESL teacher preparation can be improved most by quality focus on collaboration with mainstream teachers and by addressing a plethora of school realities that confront ESL specialists on a daily basis.

Quality of Mainstream Teacher Preparation

When asked, ESL administrators shared a wide range of responses on what they wished every mainstream teacher knew in order to meet the needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Most frequently, ESL administrators identified the need for mainstream teachers to be better prepared with knowledge about levels of English proficiency, second language acquisition, cultural competency, and developing shared accountability for ELLs’ success.

Levels of English proficiency

Two ESL administrators indicated that mainstream teachers need a better understanding of what English proficiency level competencies mean in order to appropriately differentiate their content area instruction for ELLs. One administrator stated that, “I wish they had a stronger knowledge base of the different abilities or the different language proficiency levels...so, just being mindful of the differences between the language proficiency levels and how to adjust their instruction accordingly.” This indicates that mainstream teachers are not receiving adequate preparation or in-service professional development to understand the levels of English proficiency and corresponding competencies.

Second language acquisition

Participants identified knowledge of the second language acquisition as another area of need for mainstream teachers. According to one ESL administrator:

I wish they knew about the principles of second language acquisition, BICS and CALP, how long it takes...using that as a frame to create different expectations, and appropriate ones. Because what I have found is that we largely have low expectations...really understanding acquisition, those distinctions, and I think really coming to grips with framing the kids in an assets-based orientation vs. deficit.

The ESL Administrators indicated that increased knowledge of second language acquisition would improve the ability of mainstream teachers to facilitate ELLs learning.

Cultural competence

Two of the four ESL administrators indicated that mainstream teacher preparation should include a higher level of cultural competency training. One ESL administrator asserted:

I would like them to have a little cultural competence... understanding who your audience is. I have sat in way too many meetings with lots of grown ups and listened to people...not change, modify, or simplify, or make one attempt for those folks to understand what he or she was saying. Like if you say it louder maybe they will get it. No they won't. It is like they are invisible. These children are not invisible. We cannot treat them as if they are. You need to check for understanding. You need to say 'Did you understand that? Did you get that?' You can check for understanding a million ways with all your kids. And they don't do it.

Based on this response, the ESL administrator linked cultural competency to a better understanding of second language acquisition and appropriate instructional practices, such as providing comprehensible input targeted to learners' level of receptive proficiency and incorporating comprehension checks. Further, this response highlights the invisible or marginalized status of ELLs and their families. Without cultural competence, mainstream teachers will not understand the need to attend to ELLs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Another ESL administrator recommended that mainstream teachers have a study abroad experience to develop cultural competence for working with ELLs. She stated:

I think they [mainstream teachers] need to have intense experiences in linguistically diverse settings where they are uncomfortable. And I think about myself personally, and people that have had transformational experience, it has been through their own discomfort...and then you may come out of that experience with resentment, but it's the experience, it's the conversations, and the framework of dialogue that follows that help you come to an understanding of 'I get it. I really, really get it.' But I think that is really necessary, and I can think about our gen ed teachers that have been transformed – and typically the ones that have been transformed and really get it, and are what I would call on a parallel level with

[ESL] specialists.”

This level of cultural experience is currently not required nor necessarily practical in mainstream teacher preparation programs.

To drastically improve the preparation of mainstream teachers, one ESL administrator asserted, “We just need to make ESL certification a requirement for everybody. And they have done that some places—not Indiana....” Requiring ESL certification would greatly improve the ability of mainstream teachers to support ELL learning in content area classrooms; however, the need for this type of specialized knowledge to serve ELLs is often overlooked or minimized. As one administrator noted:

Right now, the [mainstream] teachers that I see that are good teachers for most students but not for ELLs – and that is one thing that drives me nuts: ‘Best practices are best practices.’ I think we’ve got some really good teachers, but they are good teachers for their non-ELLs. And that’s hard, it’s that, how do you get leadership and other factors to really push that? Because if they continue to hear that you’re a good teacher, they think they are a good teacher for all students...and then what happens is they gain more credibility and specialty than the ESL specialist.

Deconstructing this ‘it’s just good teaching’ mentality is an area of need for mainstream teachers. The ‘it’s just good teaching’ misperception that any ‘good teacher’ can effectively teach ELL students without specialized knowledge and skills further complicates the issue of addressing gaps in mainstream teacher preparation.

Developing shared accountability

Two ESL administrators reported that mainstream teacher preparation should focus more on developing shared accountability, or ownership, for the teaching and learning of ELLs. One ESL administrator stated, “Well, obviously, responsibility-wise, everybody would take ownership.” This shared ownership would result in all members of the school community supporting the needs of ELLs. Another ESL administrator shared:

With the mainstream teachers...just having this understanding that it is not the deficiency of the child that is causing their problems... things that are in your control that can change in the environment, through their instruction they can really make an impact. Bring this child along. Not automatically resort to ‘Who can I move him to to fix him’ because nobody, it’s not a single person’s responsibility. It’s

the school building and the classroom setting in relation.

This statement highlights the need for mainstream teacher preparation to focus on developing shared ownership for ELL success.

In summary, ESL administrators suggest that mainstream teacher preparation needs to be strengthened by focusing more directly on levels of English proficiency, second language acquisition, cultural competency, and shared accountability for ELLs' success.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Based on this content analysis of four semi-structured interviews from Indiana district level ESL administrators, we have identified their views on the roles and responsibilities of ESL specialists, the knowledge and skills needed by mainstream teachers to support ELL students, and the quality of university preparation in this area. Next, we present four recommendations for improving pre-service teacher preparation and in-service professional development with attention to the roles of ESL specialists and mainstream teachers in supporting the academic success of ELLs.

First, *improve ESL and mainstream teachers' knowledge and skills related to establishing and maintaining collaboration*. Perhaps the most persistent theme in this content analysis is the need to improve collaboration between ESL specialists and mainstream teachers. According to the *Indiana Content Standards for Educators: English Learners (EL)*, ESL specialists are expected to have, "a broad and comprehensive understanding of how to exercise professional leadership in the school community by collaborating and sharing expertise with colleagues as well as advocating for English Learners and their families" (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). As this standard places the responsibility for collaborating and sharing expertise with ESL specialists, it is critical they are adequately prepared to meet this expectation. The desire of in-service ESL specialists to collaborate with colleagues and establish coaching relationships, along with associated challenges, is well documented (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). To meet this need, it is critical that ESL and mainstream teacher preparation programs and school-based professional development focus on establishing, developing, sustaining, and innovating in the area of quality collaboration skills.

Second, *develop shared accountability for the success of ELLs in mainstream teacher preparation programs*. Data from this study identified a need to improve mainstream teachers' ownership and accountability for the academic success of ELLs. As one ESL administrator pointed out, "The only way a student is going to succeed is with the help of all general ed teachers,

not just the ESL teacher.” As English (2009) asserts, “For students to flourish in ESL programs, classroom teachers need support in both improving their instructional practices and developing shared responsibility with the ESL department” (p. 504). The data also reveal that mainstream teachers need a better understanding of the role and expertise of ESL teachers. According to Pawan and Orloff (2011), ESL teachers’ interactions with content area colleagues as largely defined by classroom teachers’, “Lack of trust in, respect for, and knowledge about the ESL teachers’ abilities and contributions” (p. 468). To address this need, mainstream teacher preparation programs should focus on developing mainstream teachers’ knowledge of effective classroom instruction and assessment for ELLs as well as their understanding of the knowledge and expertise of ESL specialists.

Third, *improve mainstream teachers’ level of cultural competence.* ESL administrators in this study report that mainstream teachers need to improve their level of cultural competence in order to better understand the sociocultural backgrounds and lived experiences of ELLs and to improve their instructional practices. ESL administrators recommend policy changes to mainstream teacher preparation requirements to increase ESL coursework, or require ESL certification. As suggested by one ESL administrator, by enhancing the cultural competence of mainstream teachers, through culturally enriched student teaching and practicum experiences, teacher preparation programs can transform the thinking of mainstream teachers to address the ‘it’s just good teaching’ mentality.

Fourth, *develop ESL and mainstream teachers’ knowledge about effective ELL program models* According to ESL administrators, a variety of ESL instructional models are being implemented, including pull-out, push-in, and sheltered instruction. The quantity of daily English language development instruction that ELLs receive varies based on time, scheduling, and students’ level of English proficiency. To maximize the effectiveness of instruction provided by ESL and mainstream teachers, teacher preparation programs should develop the knowledge of both ESL and mainstream teachers regarding effective ELL program models and their implementation. Overtime, making knowledge about ELL program effectiveness a regular part of general teacher preparation would improve the likelihood that future district and school administrators would implement use of research-based program models with demonstrated evidence of effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

As shown from the perspectives of district level ESL administrators, the roles and responsibilities of ESL specialists are multi-faceted and complex. In this era of high stakes accountability, the roles, responsibilities, and preparation of ESL specialists and mainstream teachers for ELLs ought to be revisited

to address the real-world demands for greater academic achievement among ELLs. As one ESL administrator asserted, “These children are not invisible. We cannot treat them as if they are.” In order to adequately address the needs of ELLs, states, universities, districts, and schools must make significant changes to their policies, priorities, and practices related to ESL and mainstream teacher preparation requirements and professional development practices.

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